DEEP WITHIN A MOUNTAIN FORTRESS HIDDEN IN THE PACIFIC NORTH-WEST--
--A BOY'S CHILDHOOD IS BEING TORN FROM HIM...
--HIS LONG LIFE DISCARDED WITH NO REGARD FOR THE INNOCENCE FORSAKEN.
YEARS OF GROWTH AND DISCOVERY SLIP AWAY IN THE SPACE OF HOURS.
THE INFANT BECOMES A BOY AND THE BOY BECOMES...
--NOT QUITE A MAN, BUT A MAN-CHILD.
THIS IS THE WORK OF THE MUTANT NAMED VULCANN--
--ONE OF THE SECRET GUILD OF FLESH SHAPERS KNOWN AS BLOODSMITHS--
HE WAITED LONG AND PATIENTLY FOR A CHILD SUCH AS THIS ONE--
--THE PROVERBIAL DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH--
--WHOM HE CAN CUT TO A SHINE WITH UNIMAGINED INTENSITY.

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THE BOY STAGGERS--
--DISORIENTED BY HIS NEWBORN ADULT BODY--
--AND CONFUSED BY NEWFOUND SELF-AWARENESS.
WHO... AM... I?
YOU ARE GIVEN THE NAME JOAQUIN.

YOU ARE MY CHILD--MY CREATION.
WITHIN YOU IS GREAT POWER--POWER I WILL TEACH YOU TO CONTROL.

THEN... WHO ARE YOU?

I AM YOUR LORD AND MASTER.
MY WORD IS ABSOLUTE, AS IS MY LOVE FOR YOU.
OBEY ME AND I WILL GIVE YOU A WORLD THAT WILL WORSHIP AT YOUR FEET.

ON THE COAST OF WHAT'S LEFT OF CALIFORNIA, HALO CITY STANDS AS A REFUGE FOR THE OPPRESSED AND ECCENTRIC.
NOW, IT IS A CITY UNDER SIEGE, DELUGED BY UNENDING RAIN AND AN ANGRY OCEAN.
AND THOUGH THIS CITY'S PROTECTORATE, THE MUTANTS KNOWN AS THE X-MEN, HAVE KEPT THIS CITY SAFE FROM HUMAN THREAT--
--WHAT CHANCE HAVE THEY AGAINST THE FORCES OF NATURE?
HARBOR PATROL SAYS THIS STORM'S CAPSIZED MOST OF THE SMALLER BOATS DOCKED HERE.
THEY'VE REQUESTED ALL THE HELP WE CAN OFFER.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE, KRYSTAL IN! LET'S GO FISHING!
THIS STORM IS UNNATURAL.
HOW CAN THE SEA LEVEL HAVE RISEN SO QUICKLY?
stan lee presents
THE DROWNING CITY
counting down to oblivion with
john francis moore-writer
jan duursema-penciler
rob hunter & paul neary-inkers
virtual calligraphy-letterers
tom smith-colorist
malibu-separations
jaye gardner-editor
bob harras-god of the storm

COMES WITH THE TERRITORY, LUNA.
CALIFORNIA'S A MAGNET FOR DISASTER. EARTHQUAKES, FIRES, GAMMA BOMBS. NOW THIS.
MAYBE SOMEONE'S TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING--
--AND WE'RE TOO STUPID TO LISTEN.
CERTAINLY TRYING TO NAVIGATE THESE WATERS IN A CATAMARAN QUALIFIES AS STUPID.
EVEN I'M NOT THAT CRAZY.

FIRST CATCH OF THE DAY!
GASP... THANK... GASP... YOU...
SOMETIMES LA LUNATICA WONDERS IF SHE IS DECEIVING HERSELF BY PLAYING THE HEROINE.
IN HER HEART, SHE KNOWS SHE IS A PREDATOR, BORN AND BRED FOR THE HUNT--

--AND THE ONLY REAL REASON SHE'S STAYING HERE WITH THE X-MEN IS THE BOND SHE FEELS FOR TIMOTHY FITZGERALD--
--THE WILD AND RECKLESS MUTANT WHO CHANNELS AMBIENT ENERGY.
BRZZAAAAK!
AHOY THERE, MATEYS! SAY GOODBYE TO THAT ERRANT MAST.
GEEZ--YOU COULD PUT AN EYE OUT WITH THAT THING.

A CRYSTAL STAFF TELESCOPES FROM KRYSTALIN PORTER'S HANDS--
--A CRYSTOMORPHIC LIFELINE TO THE WOMAN BELOW.
WISH I HAD LUNA'S STRENGTH. IT'D SURE MAKE THIS EASIER.

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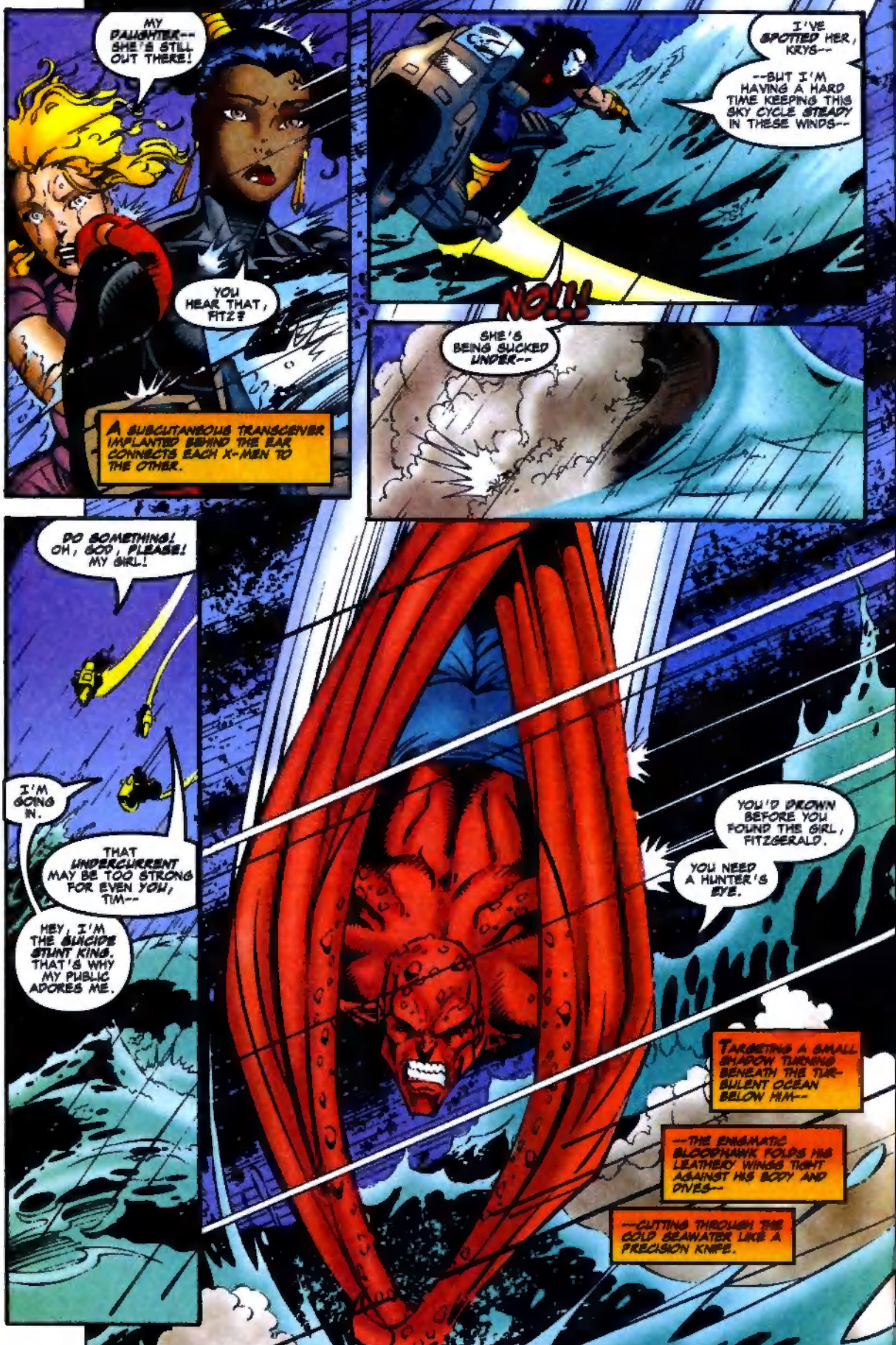
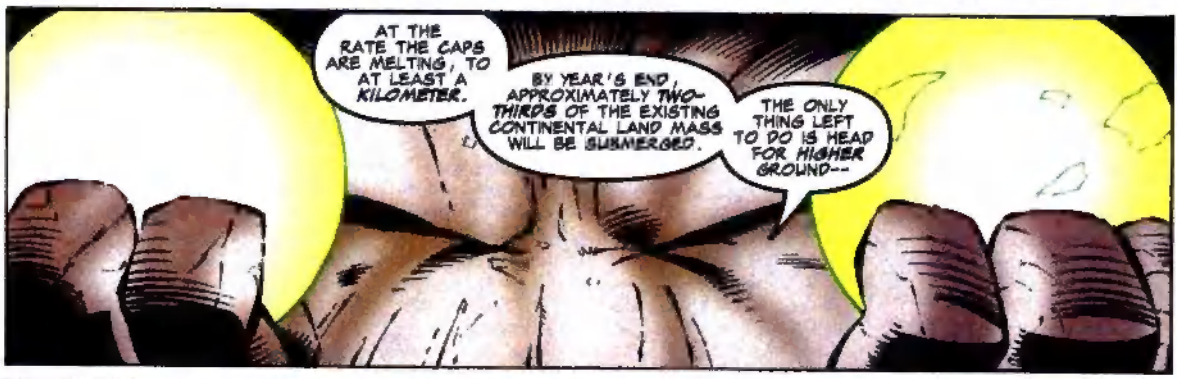

MY DAUGHTER-- SHE'S STILL OUT THERE!
YOU HEAR THAT, FITZ?
A SUBCUTANEOUS TRANSCEIVER IMPLANTED BEHIND THE EAR CONNECTS EACH X-MEN TO THE OTHER.
I'VE SPOTTED HER, KRYS--
--BUT I'M HAVING A HARD TIME KEEPING THIS SKY CYCLE STEADY IN THESE WINDS--
NO!!!
SHE'S BEING SUCKED UNDER--
DO SOMETHING! OH, GOD, PLEASE! MY GIRL!
I'M GOING IN.
THAT UNDERCURRENT MAY BE TOO STRONG FOR EVEN YOU, TIM--
HEY, I'M THE SUICIDE STUNT KING. THAT'S WHY MY PUBLIC ADORES ME.
YOU'D DROWN BEFORE YOU FOUND THE GIRL, FITZGERALD.
YOU NEED A HUNTER'S EYE.
TARGETING A SMALL SHADOW TURNING BENEATH THE TURBULENT OCEAN BELOW HIM--
--THE ENIGMATIC BLOODHAWK FOLDS HIS LEATHERY WINGS TIGHT AGAINST HIS BODY AND DIVES--
--CUTTING THROUGH THE COLD SEAWATER LIKE A PRECISION KNIFE.

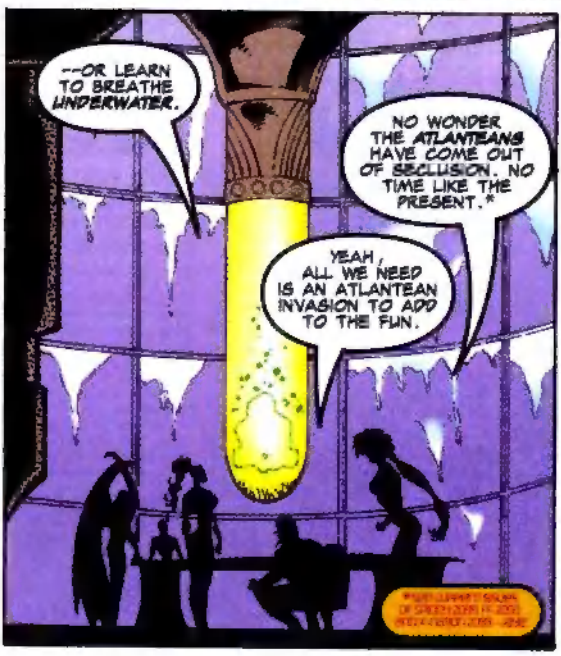
WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG? OH, NO... THEY'RE BOTH DEAD...
HOLD TIGHT. IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN THIS FREAK STORM TO KEEP 'HAWK OUT OF THE AIR.
YES!!!
=KAFF KAFK=
THIS IS A SURPRISE, 'HAWK. YOU'RE NOT NORMALLY SO SOCIAL.
GETTING SOFT IN YOUR OLD AGE?
I COULD HARDLY LET AN INNOCENT CHILD DROWN.
WELL, THE ASSIST IS DEFINITELY APPRECIATED.
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?
THE SEA HAS CLAIMED THEM. THEY ARE BEYOND OUR HELP.
THE STORM IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.
EXPECT THINGS TO BECOME MUCH WORSE.

LATER, INSIDE THE TOWER CONFERENCE ROOM, THE X-MEN GATHER ROUND THE HOLO-IMAGE OF BOOK--
--THE MUTANT SAVANT WHOSE CRUSHING BODY WEIGHT CONFINES HIM TO A LOW GRAVITY CHAMBER IN THE HALO CITY ARCHIVE.
UNDERSTAND THAT THIS STORM IS NOT CONFINED TO THE PACIFIC ALONE.
WEATHER PATTERNS ACROSS THE GLOBE ARE EQUALLY ABERRANT AND SHOW NO SIGN OF ABATING.
FURTHER, ALCHEMAX GEOTECHS CONFIRM THAT THE POLAR ICE CAPS ARE MELTING AT AN ALARMING RATE.
YOU'RE LITTLE MARY SUNSHINE TODAY, BOOK.
BUT WHAT'S THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS? THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF LOGICAL EXPLANATION.
THESE KINDS OF GLOBAL CHANGES AREN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN OVERNIGHT--
--ARE THEY?
THESE GLOBAL UPHEAVALS SEEM TO BE THE RESULT OF THIS MOON-SIZED SATELLITE--
--WHICH ENTERED OUR SOLAR SYSTEM A MONTH AGO--
--AND APPEARS TO BE HEADED FOR ORBIT AROUND THE EARTH.
LIKE A SECOND MOON. THAT EXPLAINS THE STRANGE TIDES.
WHAT IS THIS THING? AND WHY IS IT HERE?
ITS COMPOSITION AND PURPOSE ARE UNKNOWN AT THE PRESENT MOMENT.
AN ENERGY FIELD PREVENTS ASTRONOMERS FROM VIEWING ITS SURFACE.
I SUSPECT IT IS A SPACE VESSEL.

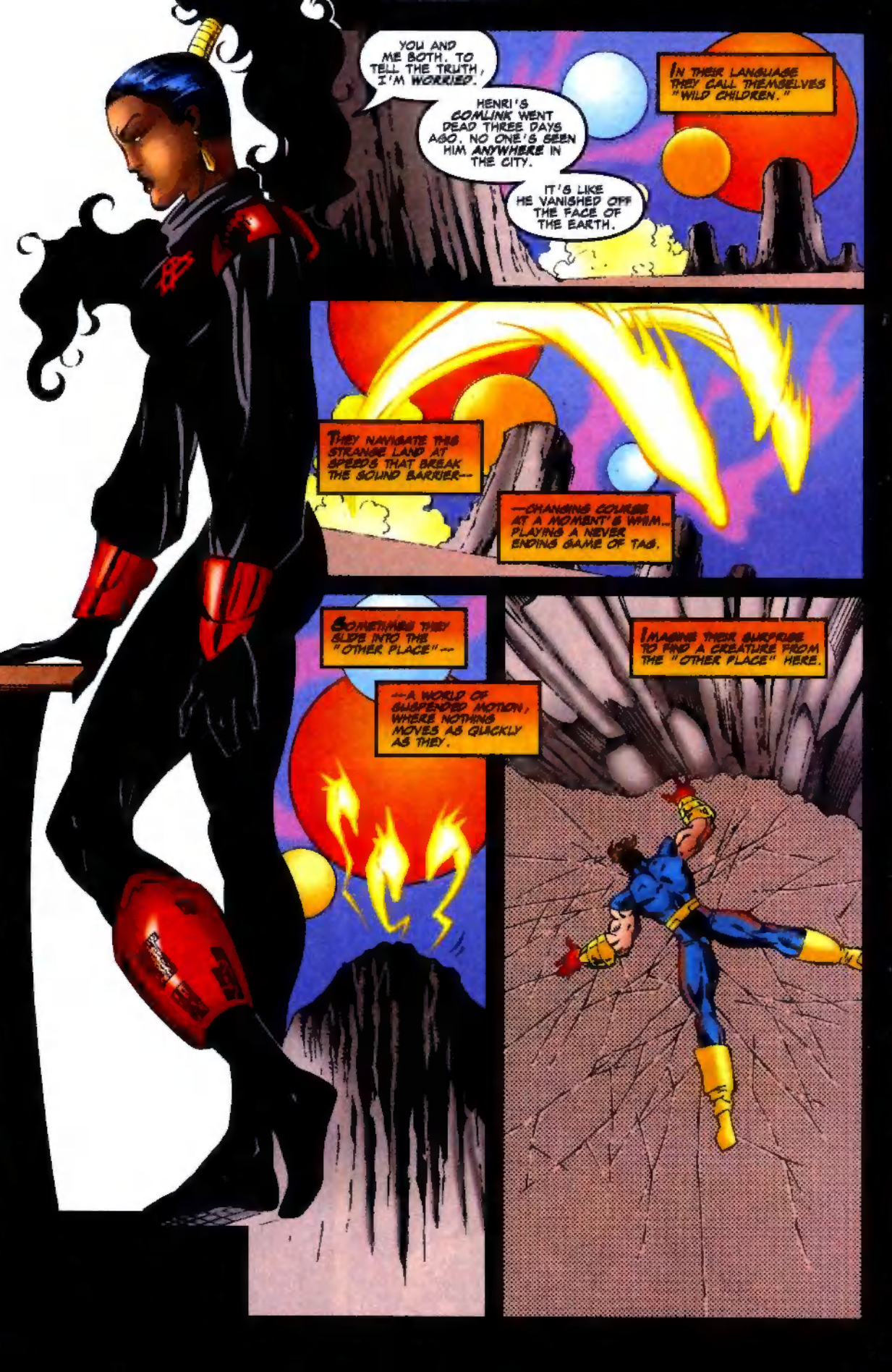
HMM, I'D ASSUMED THESE STORMS WERE A NATURAL RESPONSE TO CENTURIES OF ECOLOGICAL ABUSE.
WHO CARES WHETHER MOTHER NATURE OR MY FAVORITE MARTIAN IS RESPONSIBLE?
WE'RE STILL IN TROUBLE.
I KNEW THINGS WERE TOO GOOD TO LAST.

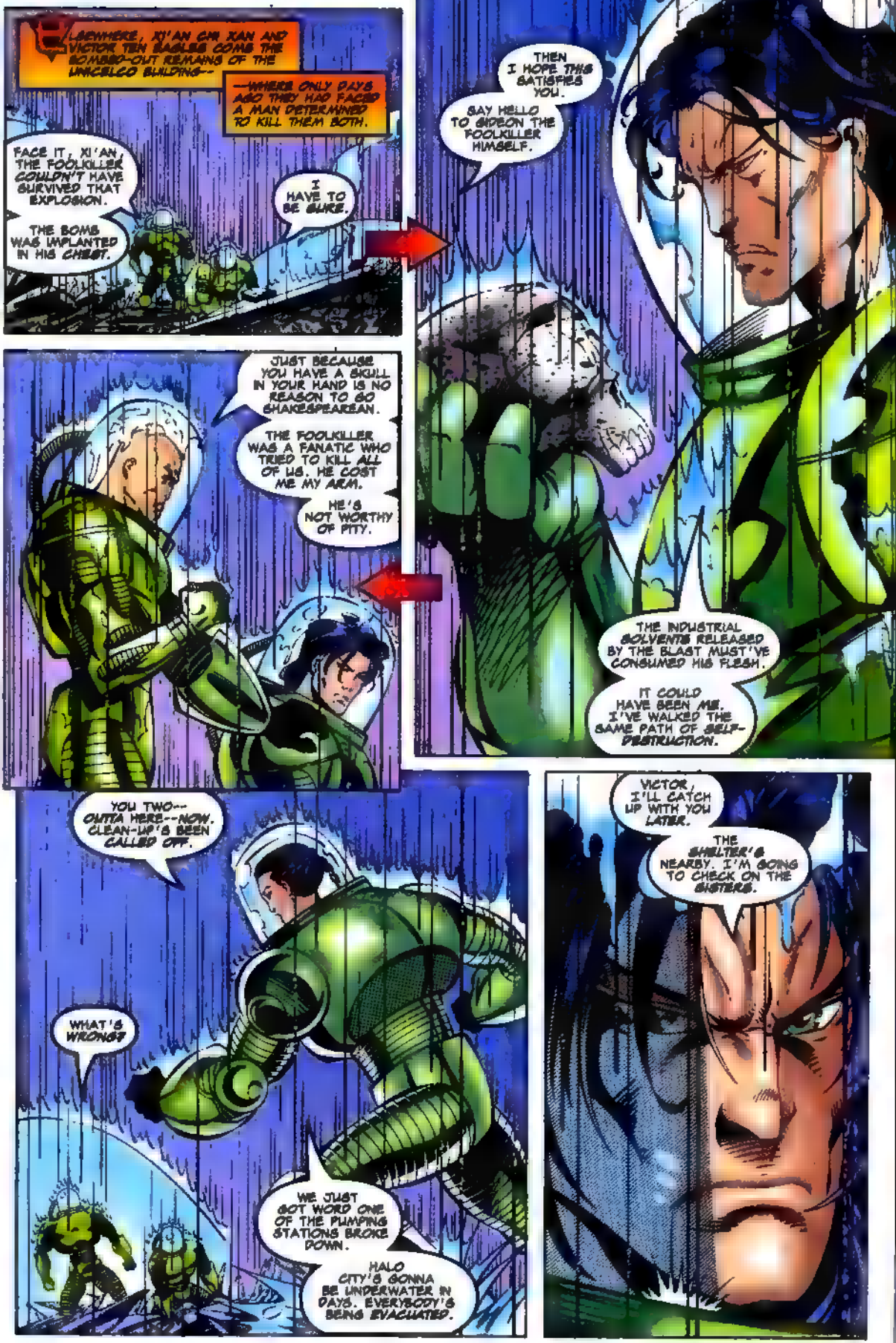
WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD, SHAM.
SAVE THE CYNICISM FOR LATER, BABY.
RIGHT NOW, WE NEED TO CONCENTRATE ON THE PROBLEM AT HAND.
BOOK, HOW MUCH HIGHER WILL THE SEA LEVEL RISE?

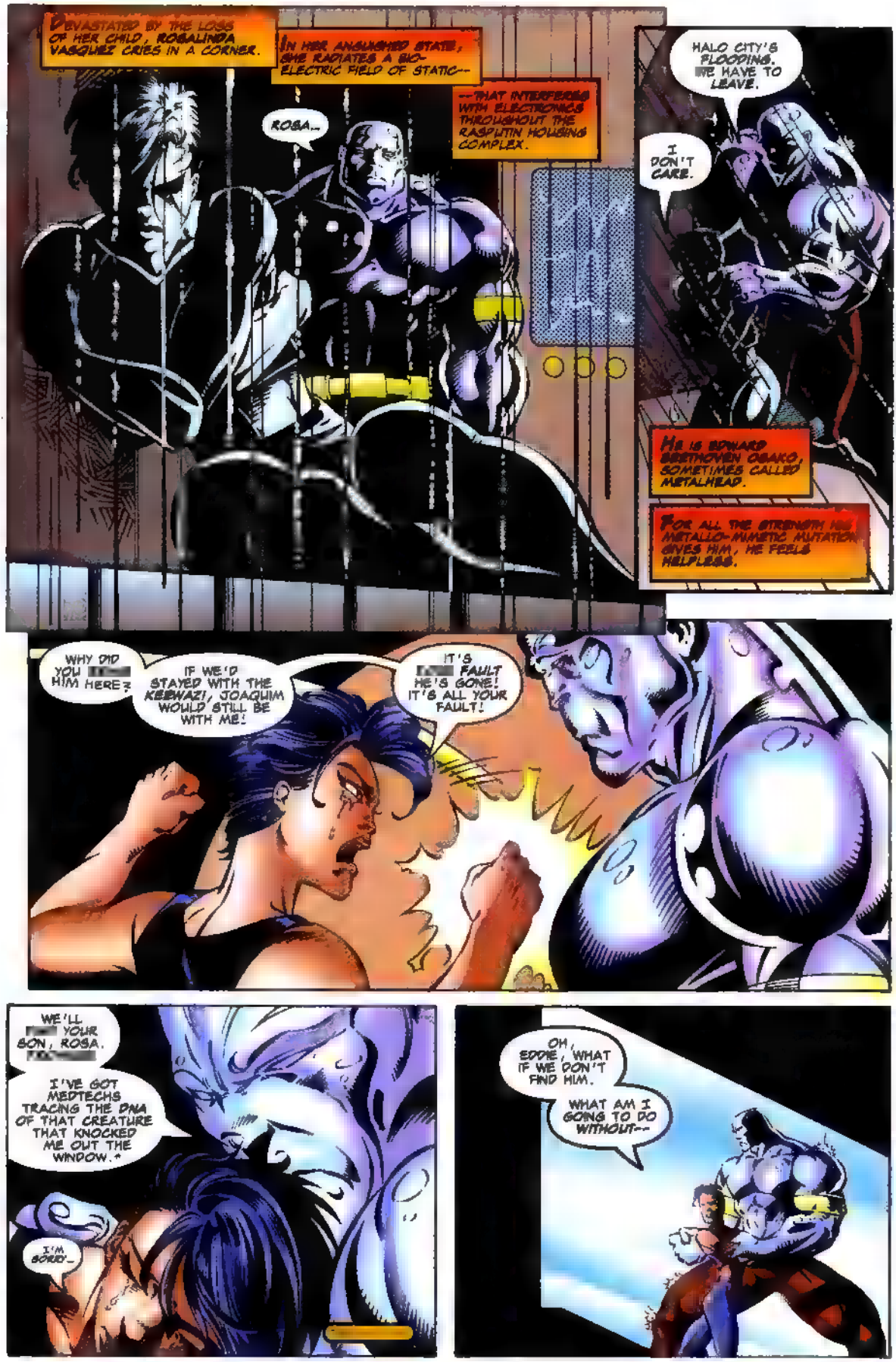

AT THE RATE THE CAPS ARE MELTING, TO AT LEAST A KILOMETER.
BY YEAR'S END, APPROXIMATELY TWO-THIRDS OF THE EXISTING CONTINENTAL LAND MASS WILL BE SUBMERGED.
THE ONLY THING LEFT TO DO IS HEAD FOR HIGHER GROUND--

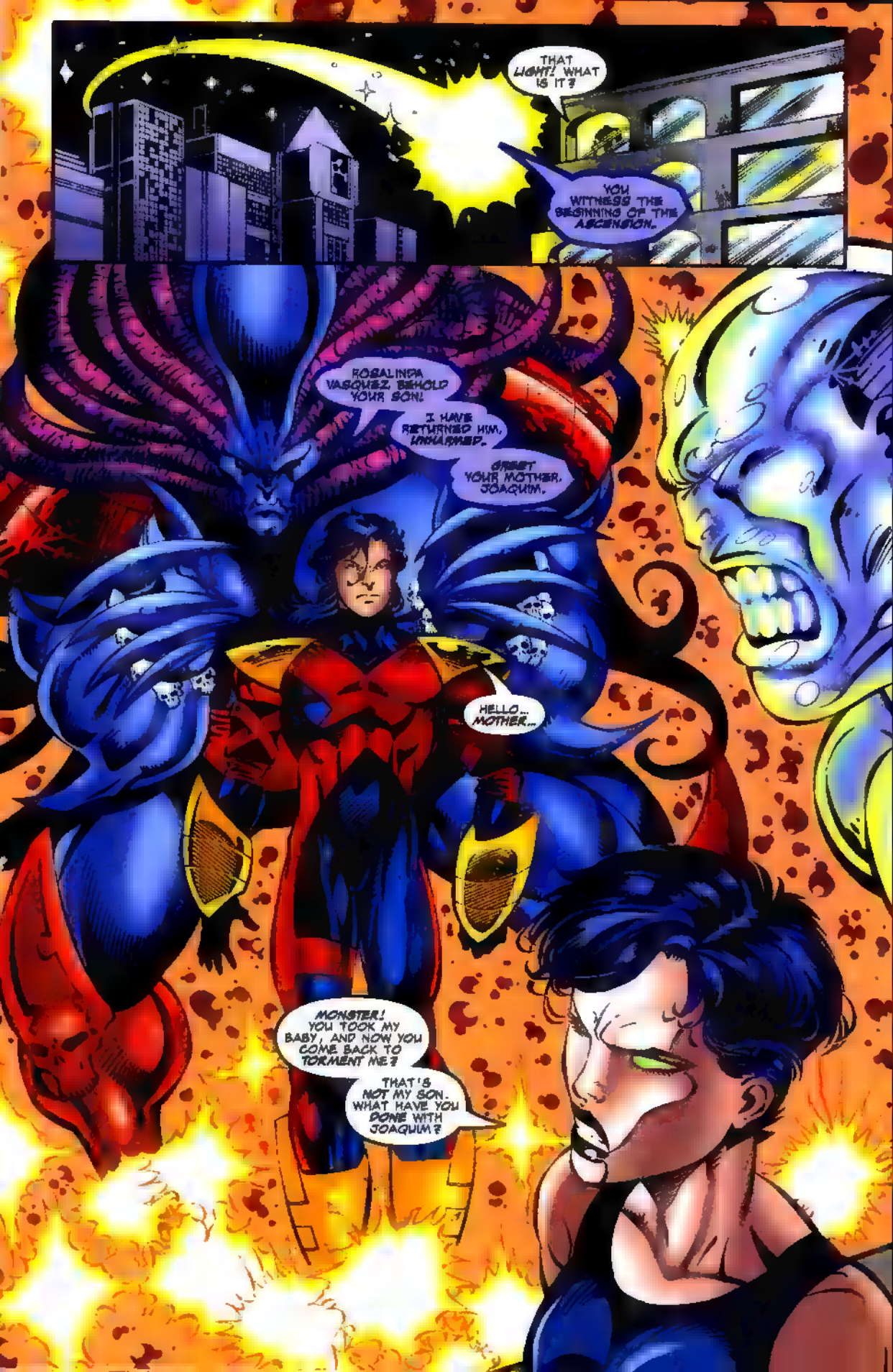

--OR LEARN TO BREATHE UNDERWATER.
NO WONDER THE ATLANTEANS HAVE COME OUT OF SECLUSION. NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT.*
YEAH, ALL WE NEED IS AN ATLANTEAN INVASION TO ADD TO THE FUN.

THE CITY COUNCIL'S DECIDED TO EVACUATE BEFORE THE CITY BECOMES A FISHBOWL.
THAT MEANS WE'RE GOING TO HAVE OUR HANDS FULL TRYING TO KEEP PEOPLE CALM.
THIS IS GONNA BE UGLY. I SURE WISH HENRI WAS HERE.


YOU AND ME BOTH. TO TELL THE TRUTH, I'M WORRIED.
HENRI'S COMLINK WENT DEAD THREE DAYS AGO. NO ONE'S SEEN HIM ANYWHERE IN THE CITY.
IT'S LIKE HE VANISHED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
IN THEIR LANGUAGE THEY CALL THEMSELVES "WILD CHILDREN."
THEY NAVIGATE THE STRANGE LAND AT SPEEDS THAT BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER--
--CHANGING COURSE AT A MOMENT'S WHIM... PLAYING A NEVER ENDING GAME OF TAG.
SOMETIMES THEY SLIDE INTO THE "OTHER PLACE"--
--A WORLD OF SUSPENDED MOTION, WHERE NOTHING MOVES AS QUICKLY AS THEY.
IMAGINE THEIR SURPRISE TO FIND A CREATURE FROM THE "OTHER PLACE" HERE.


ELSEWHERE, XI'AN CHI XIAN AND VICTOR TEN EAGLES COMB THE BOMBED-OUT REMAINS OF THE UNICELCO BUILDING--
--WHERE ONLY DAYS AGO THEY HAD FACED A MAN DETERMINED TO KILL THEM BOTH.
FACE IT, XI'AN, THE FOOLKILLER COULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED THAT EXPLOSION.
THE BOMB WAS IMPLANTED IN HIS CHEST.
I HAVE TO BE SURE.
THEN I HOPE THIS SATISFIES YOU.
SAY HELLO TO SIDEON THE FOOLKILLER HIMSELF.
THE INDUSTRIAL SOLVENTS RELEASED BY THE BLAST MUST'VE CONSUMED HIS FLESH.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN ME. I'VE WALKED THE SAME PATH OF SELF-DESTRUCTION.
JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE A SKULL IN YOUR HAND IS NO REASON TO GO SHAKESPEAREAN.
THE FOOLKILLER WAS A FANATIC WHO TRIED TO KILL ALL OF US. HE COST ME MY ARM.
HE'S NOT WORTHY OF PITY.
YOU TWO--OUTTA HERE--NOW. CLEAN-UP'S BEEN CALLED OFF.
WHAT'S WRONG?
WE JUST GOT WORD ONE OF THE PUMPING STATIONS BROKE DOWN.
HALO CITY'S GONNA BE UNDERWATER IN DAYS. EVERYBODY'S BEING EVACUATED.
VICTOR, I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU LATER.
THE SHELTER'S NEARBY. I'M GOING TO CHECK ON THE SISTERS.


DEVASTATED BY THE LOSS OF HER CHILD, ROSALINDA VASQUEZ CRIES IN A CORNER.
IN HER ANGUISHED STATE, SHE RADIATES A BIO-ELECTRIC FIELD OF STATIC--
--THAT INTERFERES WITH ELECTRONICS THROUGHOUT THE RASPUTIN HOUSING COMPLEX.
ROSA--
HALO CITY'S FLOODING. WE HAVE TO LEAVE.
I DON'T CARE.
HE IS EDWARD BEETHOVEN OSAKO, SOMETIMES CALLED METALHEAD.
FOR ALL THE STRENGTH HIS METALLO-MIMETIC MUTATION GIVES HIM, HE FEELS HELPLESS.
WHY DID YOU [redacted] HIM HERE?
IF WE'D STAYED WITH THE KEEWAZI, JOAQUIM WOULD STILL BE WITH ME!
IT'S [redacted] FAULT HE'S GONE! IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!
WE'LL [redacted] YOUR SON, ROSA. [redacted]
I'VE GOT MEDTECHS TRACING THE DNA OF THAT CREATURE THAT KNOCKED ME OUT THE WINDOW.*
I'M SORR--
OH, EDDIE, WHAT IF WE DON'T FIND HIM.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITHOUT--


THAT LIGHT! WHAT IS IT?
YOU WITNESS THE BEGINNING OF THE ASCENSION.
ROSALINDA VASQUEZ BEHOLD YOUR SON!
I HAVE RETURNED HIM, UNHARMED.
GREET YOUR MOTHER, JOAQUIM.
HELLO... MOTHER...
MONSTER! YOU TOOK MY BABY, AND NOW YOU COME BACK TO TORMENT ME?
THAT'S NOT MY SON. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH JOAQUIM?

I ASSURE YOU THAT IT IS TRULY YOUR SON WHO STANDS BEFORE YOU.
I ADMIT HE IS OLDER THAN WHEN LAST YOU SAW HIM, BUT LOOK AT HIS EYES.
THEY ARE YOUR EYES.
MOVE, ROSA!
OH MY GOD-- JOAQUIM?
I'M GONNA KNOCK THIS WONK DOWN TO THE STREET LEVEL--
--AND SEE HOW SMUG HE IS AFTER A SIX STORY DROP.
KRRASH!
NO-
THE BOY DOES NOT REMEMBER THAT EDDIE CRADLED HIM AFTER HE WAS BORN.
HE SEES ONLY THE THREAT TO VULCANN--
--THE ONLY PARENTAL FIGURE THE BOY CAN REMEMBER.

DON'T WORRY.
I'M SURE MR. OSAKO WILL UNFORTUNATELY SURVIVE BEING TELEKINETICALLY HURLED ACROSS THE CITY.
KRUNCH
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU STOLE HIS CHILDHOOD FROM MY SON--
--BUT I SWEAR I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
YOU SHOULD THANK ME, MY DEAR ROSALINDA.
BY ACCELERATING HIS GROWTH, I'VE ACTUALIZED HIS EVERY LATENT MUTANT ABILITY.
TELEPATHY. TELEKINESIS. PHOTOVOLTAIC RADIATION.
JOAQUIM WILL NOT ONLY SURVIVE THE COMING APOCALYPSE, HE WILL TRANSCEND IT.
HE WILL LEAD THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUTANTS.
UNTIL THAT TIME, HOWEVER, HE NEEDS NURTURING I CANNOT PROVIDE.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO ME, AND YOU CAN BE BY HIS SIDE AS HE BUILDS THE EMPIRE OF TOMORROW.

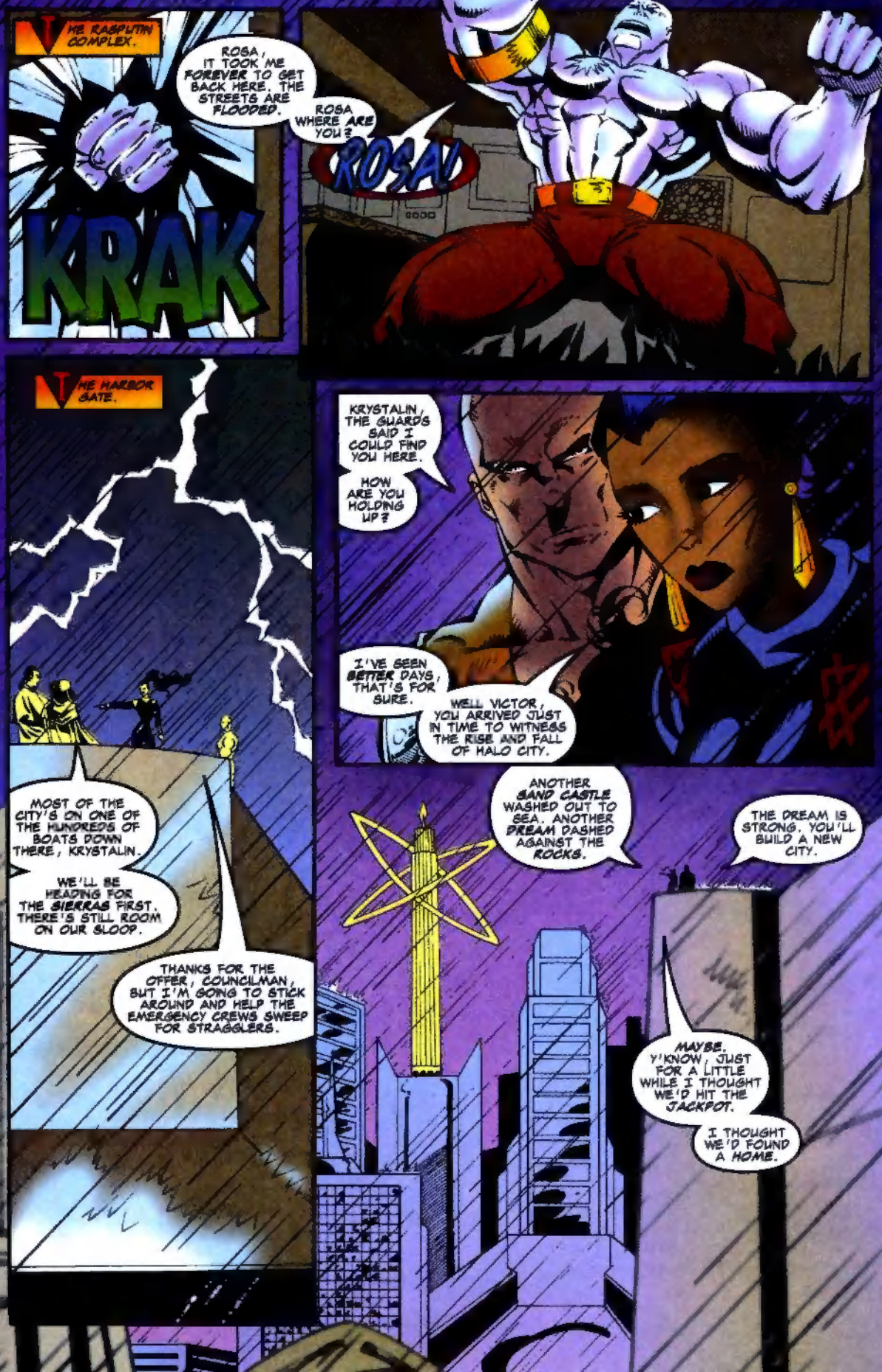
SISTER ROMALYN INNOCENCE! HAD SURVIVED COSTA RICAN FIRE FIGHTS AND THE TRANS-SIBERIAN GUN BATTLES.
LIKE ALL THE SISTERS OF THE HOWLING COMMANDMENTS SHE KNEW THE DANGERS OF MISSIONARY WORK IN WAR ZONES--
--BUT HALO CITY WAS A WAR ZONE, AND SHE AND THE OTHER SISTERS LET THEIR GUARD DOWN.*
A FATAL MISTAKE.
WHEN I REALIZED THE [redacted] I HAD CAUSED WHILE I WAS PART OF THE THEATER OF PAIN--**
--I DIDN'T THINK I COULD LIVE WITH MYSELF ANYMORE.
YOUR ORDER'S CHARITY [redacted] A WAY TO [redacted] FOR WHAT I DID--
--BY [redacted] MY MUTANT GIFTS TO [redacted] INSTEAD OF DESTROY.
I ONLY WISH MY HANDS COULD SERVE YOU THE WAY [redacted] RESUSCITATED MY DAMAGED SOUL.
REST IN PEACE, SISTER, I HOPE YOU FIND YOUR HEAVEN.
I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN VENGEANCE SO I PROMISE YOU THIS--
--YOUR KILLERS WILL FACE JUSTICE.
IT WAS THE ATLANTEANS.
THEY WANTED [redacted] WHISPER--AND SO THEY [redacted] ALL THE SISTERS.

SHAKTI HADDAD, CEREBRA, LEFT THE X-MEN TO SHEPHERD THE UNTRAINED MUTANTS INTO THE XAVIER SHELTER.
NOW, ONLY THE EMOTIONALLY FRAGILE NOSTROMO REMAINS WITH HER.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, SHAKTI? WHERE IS X-NATION?
I SWORE I'D PROTECT THE CHILDREN--
--AND I FAILED, XI'AN. I FAILED.
I CAN'T FEEL THEM ANYMORE, XI'AN.
THE EXTRASENSORY LINK I HAVE WITH THEM'S BEEN SEVERED.
THAT CAN ONLY MEAN THAT THEY'RE--
"--DEAD...
"A MAN CALLED EXODUS WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS--
"HUNTED THEM DOWN--"
TWILIGHT... WINTER... UPROAR... WULFF... CLARION...
WE'D BETTER STOP HIM, XI'AN.
NOSTROMO'S IN NO SHAPE TO BE ALONE RIGHT NOW.

I'VE GOT HIM, SHAKTI.
TAKE IT EASY, BOY. YOU'RE SAFE WITH US.
NO ONE'S SAFE! EVERYONE'S GONNA DI--
HE'S GONE CATATONIC.
HAS HE EVER DONE THIS BEFORE?
NOSTROMO'S NEVER BEEN TOO STABLE.
I'M AFRAID THAT THE LOSS OF HIS FRIEND CLARION MAY BE TOO MUCH FOR HIM TO TAKE.
LOOK AT HIS FACE--
--SOME SORT OF CIRCUITRY IS ETCHING ITSELF ACROSS HIS CHEEK.
ORDINARILY, PHYSICAL INJURY HAS CAUSED NOSTROMO'S BODY TO [redacted] ITSELF WITH TECHNO-ORGANIC TISSUE--
--BUT THIS SEEMS TO BE A PSYCHOSOMATIC RESPONSE.
NOSTROMO, IT'S SHAKTI. CAN YOU HEAR ME?
YOUR/OUR SIGNAL HAS BEEN RECEIVED.
WE AWAIT REUNIFICATION.

HALO CITY HARBOR.
I CAN'T DECIDE IF THIS IS INSANE OR IRONIC.
SIX MONTHS AGO, PEOPLE COULDN'T WAIT TO GET INTO THE CITY.
NOW THEY CAN'T WAIT TO GET OUT.
WHAT WE NEED IS ONE BIBLICAL-SIZED ARK.
AS LONG AS I'M BOOKED FIRST CLASS WITH YOU, BABY.
IF THIS IS THE END OF THE WORLD, I WANT TO GO OUT IN STYLE.
I GUESS IT'S OFFICIAL, HALO CITY IS NOW AN ISLAND.
YOU GETTING MISTY ON ME?
YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. IT'S ALWAYS HARD TO LEAVE THE PLACE YOU DIED.*
ON THE WALL...
SHAM!
QUIVER, GET OVER HERE. WE DON'T WANT TO SET SAIL ON TWO SEPARATE BOATS.
I CAN'T. THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE.
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE POLITE.

HEY!
EXCUSE ME.
SORRY.
COMING THROUGH.
FOR A GUY WITH SEISMIC POWER, RENTARO, YOU SURE ARE RELUCTANT TO USE IT.
I DON'T WANT TO INCONVENIENCE ANYONE.
HAVING TO SWIM TO HIGHER GROUND WOULD BE A BIGGER INCONVENIENCE.
THE DATA DISTRICT.
YOU DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING?
NOTHING. IT'S LIKE I FLATLINED, THEN I WOKE UP AND MY HEAD WAS CLEAR.
HAS THIS EVER HAPPENED TO YOU BEFORE?
NO. BUT LATELY, I'VE BEEN HEARING VOICES.
LOOK OUT!
RRRRMMBMBLLL
THWA-SPLORSH


THE RASPUTIN COMPLEX.
ROSA, IT TOOK ME FOREVER TO GET BACK HERE. THE STREETS ARE FLOODED.
KRAK
ROSA WHERE ARE YOU?
ROSA!
THE HARBOR GATE.
KRYSTALIN, THE GUARDS SAID I COULD FIND YOU HERE.
HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP?
I'VE SEEN BETTER DAYS, THAT'S FOR SURE.
WELL VICTOR, YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME TO WITNESS THE RISE AND FALL OF HALO CITY.
MOST OF THE CITY'S ON ONE OF THE HUNDREDS OF BOATS DOWN THERE, KRYSTALIN.
WE'LL BE HEADING FOR THE SIERRAS FIRST. THERE'S STILL ROOM ON OUR SLOOP.
THANKS FOR THE OFFER, COUNCILMAN, BUT I'M GOING TO STICK AROUND AND HELP THE EMERGENCY CREWS SWEEP FOR STRAGGLERS.
ANOTHER SAND CASTLE WASHED OUT TO SEA. ANOTHER DREAM DASHED AGAINST THE ROCKS.
THE DREAM IS STRONG. YOU'LL BUILD A NEW CITY.
MAYBE. Y'KNOW, JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE I THOUGHT WE'D HIT THE JACKPOT.
I THOUGHT WE'D FOUND A HOME.

NO! NOT ANOTHER!
I THINK WE'VE MADE OUR POINT.
THE X-MEN ARE NO LONGER FIT TO BE THE STANDARD-BEARERS FOR MUTANTKIND.
ONLY WE HAVE THE STRENGTH AND SKILL TO SURVIVE THE COMING OF THE APOCALYPSE.
THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND THIS WILL JOIN US.
AND THOSE WHO OPPOSE US WILL BE DEAD ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.
DARKSON